

Judith Lane

by JEANNE BOWMAN



SYNOPSIS: Judith Dale has gone to Rio Diablo dam to supervise its construction, according to the instructions in the will of Big Tom Bevin, her former employer. Bevin has left Judith in charge of the dam. Her husband, Norman, sides against her, and with Morton Lamper, his law partner, who is trying to break the will in favor of Mrs. Bevin and her daughter, Mathie. The will must be come, but there is no letter from Norman.

Chapter 23 DELPHY'S LETTER

"MIZ DALE," Delphy came from the house, full of new dignity and importance, "I have a letter he's an I done to get to bring my readin' glasses. Would you all read it to me?"

Judith nodded. She saw through the ruse. Delphy belonged to the generation which could neither read nor write, but proud of their children's ability, dreaded to admit their own lack.

She took the letter and with the light shining through the door at her shoulder, read:

"Dear Mammy-Delphy, I guess you don't suspect to hear from me so soon—"

"That'll be from Lige," contributed Delphy.

Judith nodded and went on. "But I got something to say to you, Miss Delphy. He come long from Galveston the night you-all left and he sure was upset."

Norman's wife looked up, startled.

"Delphy, I don't know that I have a right to read this letter—" She started to suggest she ask one of the boys to read it, then afraid of what it might contain, went on reading.

"He bring Miz Dale and Miss Tilly with him. They was sposed to talk to Miz Dale. Miz Dale, she make a joke for it. She say she told him so and Mister Norman he sit down quick and he say did she leave a letter for him."

"I tell him she didn't and he say where is Delphy and I say she is gone with Miz Dale, and Miss Tilly she say, Miz Dale have her nerve when Delphy done raise him for Miz Dale steal you way."

"Did she say that?" fumed Delphy. "She always has been the cussidest girl in the world. Go on Miz Dale."

"I tell Miz Dale, right sharp, that Miz Dale didn't know you was going. I tell her Delphy she say she is real quality and she going to take care of her and I tell her you took some grease and flannel and a brick and chocolate. Mister Norman he laugh some time. He say he better get the money an I tell him you got it from me and he say he sure pay me back but I tell him you win it honest shootin' crap and he laugh some more. But he say anyhow and now I got eighty dollars and I think I better marry Rosa Williams cause he got twenty left from her first husband's funeral and we can get it in the bank and go to Galveston for our trip."

"I ask Miz Dale, you know, old Miz Dale, if she think that is a good plan and Miss Tilly she speak up and she say it is. Miz Dale was going to stay 'till Mister Norman got ready to take Miz Dale back 'd be too old to marry—"

Judith put the letter down a moment. So she had had a right to be jealous of Mathie, and Norman was through. Querter to be reading of it, seeing the things she saw through the penciled scrawl of a servant.

"WHAT does he mean, Miz Dale?" questioned Delphy, puzzled.

"Goodness only knows," answered Judith and turned again to the letter.

"Mister Norman he is gone upstairs when she put Miz Dale. She don't like it none. I didn't go long with him because I ain't never forgot the time he had his teeth birthday and I had mine same time. Mister Norman, he say I can't have the box of candy, the biggest one with the red bow, then he go away and Miz Tilly she stole that box right outen from under my eyes and she say she have Big Tom hoss whip me if I tell. I didn't want her to steal nothing from Miz Dale so I stay."

Judith put the letter down again. What Mathie was stealing from her couldn't be seen with the physical eye, but it was more valuable than any treasure in Hillendale.

"Read on," prompted Delphy.

"Miss Tilly she acted up just like she own the house. She make some talk about how she'd put the davenport by the sun window and then Miz Dale she speak up right sharp. She say 'Lissen here, Mathie, she say 'Lissen here, you song holdin' no wake 'till the patient is sure suff daid.'"

"Mammy Delphy, why'd didn't you-all tell me Miz Dale, our young Miz Dale was so sick?"

"Miss July, what do he mean by that?"

Judith looked up, her eyes hot with humiliation and bright with tears. "I think he didn't understand what Mrs. Dale said. She meant that Miss Mathie mustn't..." she sought for a word the woman would understand, "mustn't gloat over Mr. Norman divorcing me until it had actually taken place, and then she mustn't think she's going to move

into Hillendale until Mister Norman marries her."

"Miz Dale, is you and Mister Norman going to get a divorce?"

It was a personal question and if Delphy hadn't sacrificed her own comfort, in fact everything pertaining to herself in her zeal to take care of her "Miz Dale," Judith might have resented it. As it was she could understand.

"I hope not, Delphy. I don't want a divorce. You and I both know that Mister Norman is the finest man in the world."

"Sure do," affirmed Delphy, then. "But, Miz Dale, how come you run away and leave him 'thout you don't want to?"

Judith put into words the old woman would comprehend what had led up to her taking Big Tom's place at the dam.

DELPHY interrupted—"I see," she said, and proceeded to condense Judith's wordy explanation into a line. "Big Tom wanted the dam built for good, 'n' old Lamps-ea; he wanted it built for evil." She studied a moment then arose.

"Miz Dale, you gotta stay right here, you 'n' me. We gotta stay right here 'till that dam is finish, else Old Mister Tom, he'll come back and hant you the rest'a your days."

Judith paid little attention to Delphy the next day and so did not see her in conference with Goodwin, a young engineer with whom she, Judith, had gone to college, nor did she talk to that delighted young man until after the mail had gone out the day following.

"Say, Judy, that old servant of yours is a card," he confided that evening. "She had me write to her son Lige, because she forgot her 'founting pen.'"

"She asked you to write?" Judith was alarmed. She not only had hoped to know what went into Delphy's letters but to protect herself from word of her personal affairs getting out into Big Tom Town.

"Yes, she said you were too busy. I thought you'd get a kick out of hearing some of the things she had me write. For instance, she said you were eating your heart out for Mister Norman, but scared to come home to see him. Big Tom's ghost would come along after you and shoo you right back. She had me tell Lige that you took all of your orders from this ghost and she thought you were his me-jum."

"Me-jum?" questioned Judith, then with a wall "Oh, dear she meant medium, can't you imagine what a delicate morsel of gossip that will be after Lige spreads it with his usual elaborations? Anything else?"

"Nothing much. She said for him to take good care of Mister Norman and make sure Rosa Williams didn't starch his cuffs in hot weather, and if Matilly came over he was to put art sink in her coffee."

"Art sink?" interrupted Judith.

"Arsenic," interrupted Goodwin.

"Oh, my goodness, I hope Lige doesn't take her seriously."

"I hope no does," Goodwin continued half humorously. "I imagine a lot of us would rest easily if Matilly swallowed a dose of something of the kind. Seen today's paper? Of course, you haven't. The boys brought one in on the hand car. Lamper's succeeded in having the case moved up on the calendar, they called for a jury this morning."

Judith's breath caught in a quick gasp. She realized she mustn't let her alarm spread to even the most unimportant junior engineer in the place.

"Goodwin," she confessed, "I've been so busy I haven't even thought of the will contest."

"You must be pretty sure of winning," he said. "Well, if Big Tom built his dam as well as he forecast the specifications on this dam we're all safe."

"Yes," said Judith quietly.

The conversation drifted on idly, returning, Judith realized, to the subject of Big Tom Bevin with astonishing frequency.

Bevin had been a leading light in the business world, she knew well. Now she was learning from Goodwin that he was a legend among even the engineering students in the Texas schools.

"I think sometimes," said Goodwin, "that he was helping half the young would-be engineers in Texas. I know he helped me."

"And me."

But Judith found it difficult to concentrate even on Big Tom's virtues with the menace of Lamper's always in the back of her mind, and was glad when Goodwin rose.

After he had left she went to her chair on the little front porch. The dam was being constructed by loyal hands, no chance of subterfuge, faulty material, dishonesty there. Would the will contest have the same chance?

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Tomorrow, Judith has a visitor.

IRRIGATION CHIEF GIVES INSIGHT ON LOCAL CONDITION

Orchards of the Medford Irrigation district have been fairly thoroughly soaked by the use of flood waters from Butte and Bear creeks, according to Manager Olen Arnsperger.

This condition means two things, Engineer Arnsperger states:

It will give the orchard land a moisture supply until well into June, thus conserving the irrigation storage water and permit the use of flood water now, for general farming and gardening in the Medford irrigation district.

All creeks in the valley, including Little Butte, Big Butte and Bear creek, are now falling, according to Manager Arnsperger.

Orchardists and farmers are hoping for June rains, such as fell in pioneer days but have not been very regular of late years.

The water conditions are not so good in the Talent district, which has small flood water privileges.

Refunding of the Talent irrigation district bonds via a loan from the Federal Reconstruction Finance corporation is progressing, according to Arnsperger, but slower than for the Medford district.

The Talent bondholders' committee in Portland desires to procure more than the approximate 35 per cent which the government has agreed to loan the Talent district and, in order to expedite the refunding and bring the matter to a culmination, the Talent district has made a pre-

sentation to the RFC of what it can pay and has asked that the loan be increased.

The Medford district is in an agreement with the bondholders on a basis of 40 per cent of the value of the bonds. Of this the government will lend approximately 35 per cent to the district and the district, through collection of back assessments and other incomes, will increase the payment on the bonds to approximately 40 per cent.

On this basis about \$900,000 of the \$1,147,000 of Medford irrigation district bonds outstanding have been pledged—\$700,000 having already been deposited, holders of about \$125,000 have agreed to accept and local holders of about \$70,000 of the bonds are agreeable to the 40 per cent settlement.

Those interested in arranging these loans to the irrigation districts are anxious that the deals be completed as, in addition to the payment of the bonds, it will clear the financial situation considerably, permitting many farm owners to borrow from governmental agencies, whereas at present, because of the uncertainty of the situation, they cannot negotiate loans.

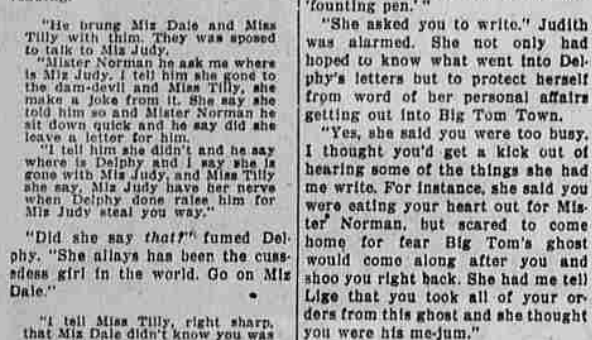
GIVE IT A WHIRL by Hatlo



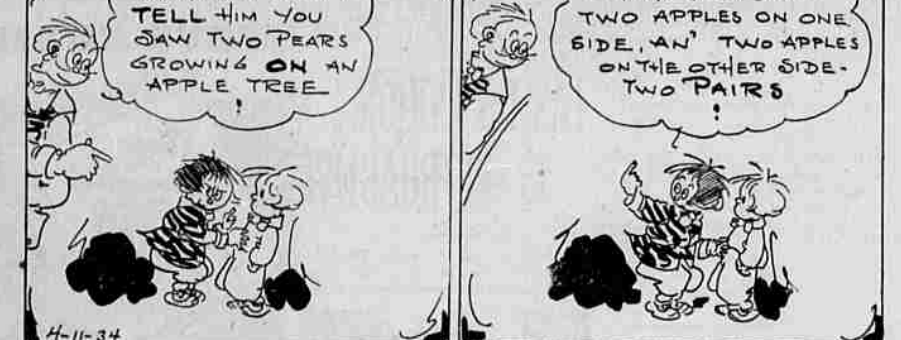
THE WORLD AT ITS WORST By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



MATTER POP—



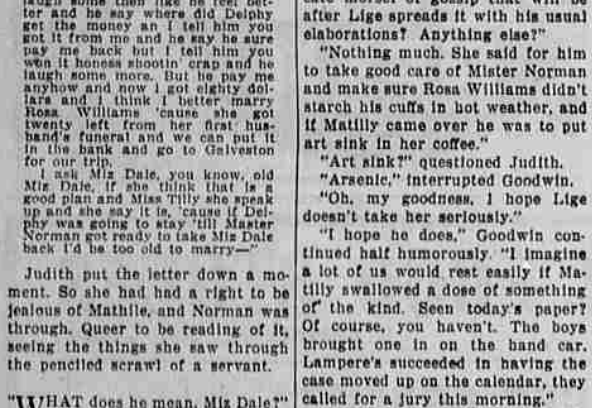
TAILSPIN TOMMY—'No Parachute!'



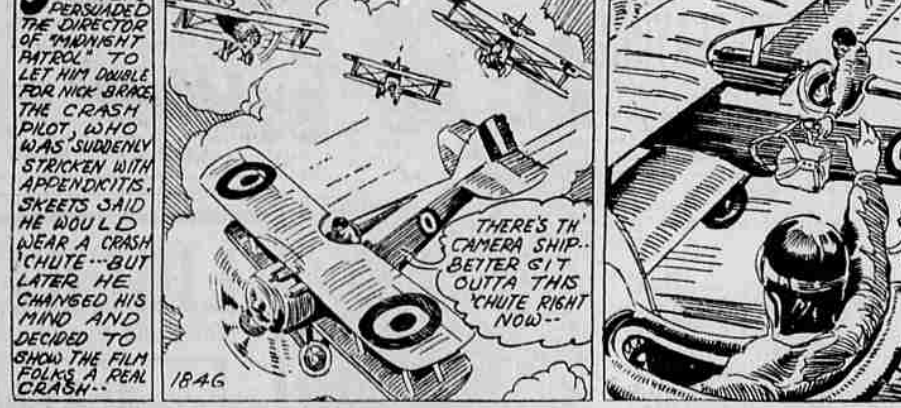
By C. M. Payne



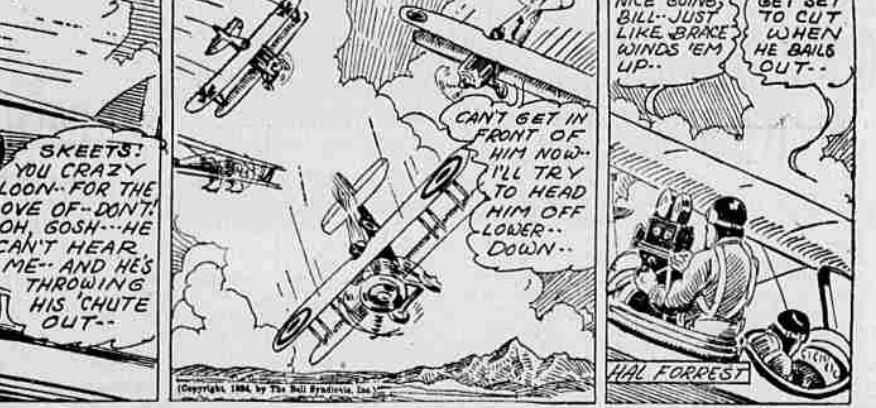
BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Cap'n Ike



THE NEBBS—On The Dotted Line



By Hal Forrest



BELL OF ANCIENT SHIP DRAGGED OUT OF BAY

SAN FRANCISCO, April 13. — (AP) — From a watery crypt, 100 fathoms deep of the Farallone Islands, the Consolidated Fisheries trawler, Junta, today dragged the corroded bronze ship's bell of the Yankee clipper, Noon Day, which founded with all hands aboard January 1, 1863, just outside the Golden Gate.

BRINGING UP FATHER



By Edwin Alger



BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManus



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